THE REDBIRD WORD

Volume 100 Issue 4 **Celebrating 100 years!**

Alton High School, 4200 Humbert Rd., Alton, Ill. 62002, Room B136

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor-In-Chief	Leigha Cole
Social Media Manager	Lydia Copeland
Social Media Manager	Raye Holmes
Web Editor	Kolten Clore
Photo/Art Editor	Juliette Meza
Broadcast Editor	Garrett Stafford
News Editor	Finn Lile
Features Editor	Lily Waltz
Sports Editor	Kyridas Orr
Sports Editor	Heaven Everage
Copy Editor	Stella Cowan
Copy Editor	Victoria Strowmatt
Featured Reporters	Joshua Lumpkins Jessica Zhong

Editorial policy: The Redbird Word and The Daily Bird operate as public forums of expression. Readers can email letters to the editor at the.redbird.word@gmail.com Expressions made in these student-led publications are in no way an expression of the district or the school board.

ABOUT THE COVER

Christmas Wonderland at Rock Springs Park shows a Christmas light walk-through featuring their display of decorations organized by the Grandpa Gang. More information can be found on pages 7-8.
Photo by Garrett Stafford, Broadcast Editor

Follow us on our social media!
@the_dailybird

Table of contents

Pins Up 4

Behind the Music 6

Reimagine Alton 10

Al Dente 11

SAVING FOR THE SEASONS

How-To Budget During This Holiday Season

By Lily Waltz, Features Editor

For many, Christmas is the time of year when shoppers extend their budgets, eager to provide gifts for both friends and family alike. According to U.S. News and World Report, in 2024 Americans were expected to spend almost $1000 on gifts, decorations, food and other seasonal items.

This year may look a little different for some families. Due to the longest government shutdown in U.S. history, numerous families have faced a variety of financial challenges such as losing a job or SNAP benefits.

"The government shutdown should only temporarily affect families relying on government paychecks, but some might be delayed waiting on paychecks and could miss out on some deals available right before and after Black Friday," business and marketing teacher Bobby Rickman said.

During this time, individuals tend to overspend on their loved ones. This is caused by the desire to buy a gift for each person equally, but this can ultimately put them into financial turmoil.

"It is hard to spend the same amount on each family member, and once you overspend on one person, the cycle repeats and then you go way over budget for the entire family," Rickman said.

For senior Briana Wermke, she said she has become much more mindful about her spending habits over the past three years. She has not felt the need to overspend on items, especially as she has become much more aware of the overconsumption around her.

"I hope more individuals realize the overconsumption in their lives and make a change to not only help themselves but to decrease environmental issues," Wermke said.

This holiday season, Wermke said she plans to carry on that same mentality with gift giving as well.

"This year I'm trying to stay sentimental when giving, which usually means making something that has significance to someone else," Wermke said.

Overconsumption is seen in many households, but this can be prevented in a variety of ways. Whether it is shopping secondhand, spending quality time with loved ones or giving back to local organizations, there are many practical ways that Americans can regulate spending this holiday season.

"Making donations on behalf of friends to a worthy cause is a great way to show gratitude and provide for others in need," Rickman said. "Prioritize spending, look at finding value of what individuals on your list want instead of buying for the most expensive items."

To help combat financial mistakes, there are many opportunities for thrifting, recycling old items and shopping locally. Doing this enriches the community and helps support growing businesses.

"I always find that the things that matter the most to people are typically found locally," Wermke said. "I don't see the need to go out of my way to order online when there are plenty of materials and necessities at the stores close to me."

"Thanks, It's Vintage" held its Christmas Vintage Market at Post Commons on Nov. 21. The event featured a variety of vendors selling thrifted items.

Photo by Lily Waltz, Features Editor

NEW COACH, SAME STANDARD

Girls Basketball Begins 25-26 Season Under Riney

By Heaven Everage, Sports Editor and Joshua Lumpkins, Reporter

Banners from past championships hung above the court as the Alton High School girls' basketball team gathered for their first practice under new Head Coach, Andre Riney, a reminder of the expectations waiting for a team hoping to return to state once again.

The arrival of Riney marks the beginning of a new era for the program, though many players already knew him long before he stepped into the varsity role. The longtime Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) coach said that those relationships were a major reason he accepted the job.

"Most of them, I have coached in the AAU setting and helped many of them receive some collegiate offers," Riney said. "I knew what I was getting myself into and also knew the challenges ahead for this current group."

Riney brings years of experience through local coaching roles, nearly five years at Ball Hogg Academy, and even coaching the Alton boys' basketball team during the 2021 COVID-shortened season. Athletic Director, Chris Kusnerick, said the school was confident in its choice.

"He had been on our boys' staff a few years ago, so we knew what Coach Riney was all about," Kusnerick said.

Junior guard Kourtnee Evans said many teammates had already worked with the new staff. Coach Steen, who transferred from the boys' program to join Riney's staff, has also made the adjustment smoother for players.

"Almost everyone was very familiar with Coach Dre and Coach Steen… so it wasn't too hard of an adjustment," Evans said. "We're thankful for the intensity and encouragement they've brought to us."

Senior point guard Justice Haynes said she already knew Riney from his coaching experience with select basketball teams.

"Before practice started, I knew my coach from outside of school, so we already have a connection," Haynes said. "But now that practice has started, I feel like I'm getting to know him more on a basketball level. He's being very helpful, and he has a great sense of humor."

The Redbirds enter the season with seven seniors and the memory of last year's third-place state finish still fresh. Riney said continuing the program's standard is the top priority.

"The priorities for the team are to develop a standard of excellence," Riney said. "Coach Howard did a great job of setting the foundation… and it is on us to keep that standard going."

For senior Kaylea Lacey, that legacy motivates the entire roster. We know we are being hunted very hard knowing the fact we lost three big seniors last year," Lacey said. "I believe that is pushing us more to show that we are still capable of being great."

Riney has also turned his attention to the future of the program by becoming involved with the middle school teams. Kusnerick said that commitment is already making an impact.

"He has shown a big interest in the middle school team, which is a first in many years," Kusnerick said. "He is willing to hold kids accountable and push them to develop their game."

As for the high school squad, Riney said what excites him most is their potential.

"The more you teach them, the more they grow. I see it every day in practice," Riney said.

The team hopes that growth will carry them back to state. Their game schedule can be found on Max Preps, where tickets can also be purchased through GoFan.

The team's goal remains firm.

"We've been conference champs, regional champs, sectional champs, super sectional champs and third place at state," Evans said. "The goal is to keep going further."

Coach Riney leads a huddle during an Alton Middle School girls' basketball practice where members of the high school girls' basketball team are assisting.
Photo Courtesy of Alton Middle School Head Girls' Basketball Coach, Jayla Fox-Wallace.

PINS UP

Boys' Bowling Team Aims For State Finals Again

By Lydia Copeland, Social Media Manager

With their sights set for state finals, the boys' bowling team is practicing nearly every night of the week hoping to live up to the legacy of their class of 2025 predecessors.

"Last year, we did pretty well; we made it to state and we won sectionals," senior varsity bowler Joseph Ventimiglia said. "We lost some of our good players, but I hope we can keep it together and live up to that legacy."

Senior Brayden Buchanan has the personal goal of averaging 200 per game. He said he also hopes to go to state, either individually or as a team. He believes that both his personal and team-wide efforts will pay off.

"I expect our team to be one of the best throughout the conference if we stay consistent and try our best," Buchanan said.

The Illinois High School Association (IHSA) boys' bowling regionals will take place Feb. 6-7, followed by sectionals on Feb. 14. Finally, state finals are set to take place on Jan. 31 and Feb. 1. The team is working vigorously in order to aptly prepare for these upcoming tournaments.

"We practice everyday, Monday through Thursday after school," Ventimiglia said. "Leading up to tournaments, the varsity team also practiced on Fridays in order to get the game plan ready to do well."

Last year, the team included three seniors - Sam Ottwell, Eric Braundmeier and former captain, Gabriel Futhey. That number has since increased to four, including Joseph Ventimiglia, Brayden Buchanan, Jackson Lewis and Ben Schultz.

"I feel the roaster is still well rounded, but we did lose some amazing seniors from last year," Ventimiglia said. "Sam Ottwell and Gabe Futhey were amazing key factors in our success last year."

Last year, the team gained a new coach, Ray Lewis. Futhey equates parts of their previous success to his leadership.

"The new coach, Ray Lewis, was a welcome change that perhaps brought the better side out of some of us," Futhey said.

Lewis began coaching the team last year. His main goals going into this season are to win the conference again and make it to state. He has high hopes for this year, believing that this roster is just as good, if not better.

"I'm feeling really good about the team this year," Lewis said. "We made it to state last year and I believe we will again this year."

THE BOYS' BOWLING SEASON ENDS ON JAN. 31. THE TEAM HAS 13 MORE GAMES. THEIR NEXT GAME IS THE BELLEVILLE EAST SOUTHERN ILLINOIS TEAM CHALLENGE AT BEL-AIR BOWL ON DEC. 13 WITH THEIR NEXT HOME GAME BEING ON DEC. 22 AT BOWL HAVEN LANES.

Junior Luke Ventimiglia approaches the lane in order to deliver the ball.
Photo by Lydia Copeland, Social Media Manager

Senior Benjamin Schultz maintains the finishing position while at practice.
Photo by Lydia Copeland, Social Media Manager

SLEIGH RIDE

Band Honors Long-Lasting Traditions

By Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager

During class, senior Makayla Burns reviews her part for the upcoming concert.
Photo by Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager

Every year, like clockwork, the band performs the song "Sleigh Ride" during their winter concert. This year that tradition continued on Dec 9.

In also keeping with the tradition, the winter concert was a combined concert with the middle school band. Middle school assistant band director, Christopher Jarden, said they have had a combined concert for the past few decades.

"We've been doing a combined winter concert with the bands since I was in middle school, possibly even before," Jarden said. "The intent is for the audience members and students to see the progression of how far our students come in their musical proficiency from 6th grade to 12th grade."

There are two different levels to the high school band – symphonic and wind ensemble. Wind ensemble is an audition-based band class, while symphonic is more an entry level class. In honor of the performance, the high school bands played the piece titled "The Nightmare Before Christmas" as a combined piece with the middle school's honor band.

"I think it's a great opportunity for them to see what it's like to play pieces at a higher skill level and in a larger ensemble," junior Quinn Halliday said. "It's another chance to give them an idea of how band up at the high school works. I think it'll end up being a great experience."

Head Band Director, Matthew Chesner, gave his students their music after their first concert in early October.

"We as musicians I think are responsible for taking all the time we need to make the music by internalizing it and being able to perform it at the highest level possible," Chesner said. "We can certainly take time to reflect on our performance and to identify things that we want to improve on in our next performance."

Band directors pick out music to teach the students new skill sets. Though it isn't all about new skills, sometimes it is about diversity.

"Thankfully, within the past five to 10 years, band as a medium has been moving towards incorporating more composers of color, queer composers, women composers, younger and living composers, not just composers who we've been playing for the last hundred years," Chesner said. "Now, that music is important too, but we need to program other voices alongside the music that's been programmed for a long time."

Freshmen Addyson Spencer and Maci Alm play their warm up during 5th hour symphonic band.
Photo by Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager

BEHIND THE MUSIC

Students Earn Their Way To ILMEA

By Juliette Meza, Photo & Art Editor

The sound of students practicing spread through Belleville West Township High School on Nov. 22 for the Illinois Music Educators Association (ILMEA) District 6 Festival. Students in orchestra, band and choir, who were selected for the festival, had already put hard work into their auditions for ILMEA.

"ILMEA is a professional organization for educators representing all areas and levels of music education for the state of Illinois," Orchestra Director, Laura Plummer, said.

ILMEA is a statewide organization that can expand students' knowledge for a future in a music department and even prepare them to perform at a higher level festival later in the school year.

"Illinois is divided into nine geographic districts and each district has junior and senior level band, choir and orchestra festivals in the fall," Plummer said. "From there, the top-ranked students from each district are invited to participate in the ILMEA All-State Festival at the end of January."

Any student could audition for ILMEA, but most of the rehearsing is done on personal time. The music is given months in advance but can be difficult to learn. Many students started practicing over the summer and recorded their auditions in October.

"The audition music is challenging, but very achievable if you put the time in to practice for the audition," Band Director, Matt Chesner, said. "College professors from around the state of Illinois will make reference recordings of the audition excerpts for students to listen to as they get ready for the auditions."

Not very many students get selected to participate in ILMEA. Jazz Band Director, Christopher Jarden, has helped students rehearse outside of school to ensure they were prepared to submit their auditions.

"Students compete for spots against other high school students from here all the way down to Carbondale school districts," Jarden said. "In the case of jazz piano, which Erick Humphrey was selected for, there were only four piano players selected from that whole region."

Senior violinist Makayla Burns has gone to ILMEA all four years of high school. She said she has learned new skills and met plenty of other students through these festivals.

"It's really fun getting to perform with such a large ensemble of kids from Alton and all over the state," Burns said.

Once students arrived at the District 6 Festival, they started rehearsing. Later in the day, everyone performed a concert.

"This year, the ILMEA District 6 Senior Orchestra performed 'Carnival Overture' by Antonin Dvorak and 'Saturday Night Waltz' and 'Hoe-Down from Rodeo' by Aaron Copland," Plummer said. "Their conductor was Dr. Joseph Choi who conducts the Belleville Philharmonic."

Choir students rehearse in a very similar way. Choir Director Leah Galbraith encourages all of her students to audition to experience the rehearsals with a well-versed director.

"They work on balance among their sections, dynamics (louds and softs), phrasing, different styles and musicality," Galbraith said. "At the end of a day of rehearsal, they perform a concert all together for their families and friends."

Getting the opportunity to participate in ILMEA can strengthen students' knowledge on the art of performing and can be a great learning experience.

"ILMEA is challenging, and takes time and preparation, but can lead to some really wonderful performance opportunities with other talented high school musicians, and create relationships with people who are as passionate as you are about performing," Chesner said.

ILMEA choir students partake in a group photo after performing a concert.
Photo Courtesy of Choir Director Leah Galbraith

A tree is strung with lights at Rock Springs Park.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo and Art Editor

LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

Colorful lights drape across a hill in Rock Springs Park.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo and Art Editor

Gang Activity: Retired Volunteers Spread Holiday Cheer

By Stella Cowan, Copy Editor

Rodger Lott dresses for the children's Santa visitation at Rock Springs Park.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo and Art Editor

Each year as the holiday season draws near, lights begin to sparkle along College Avenue. Cars filled with friends and families line the road, waiting patiently to visit one of Alton's iconic Christmastime traditions: the Christmas Wonderland lights at Rock Springs Park.

This display of festivity, over a mile long for drivers, has been a staple to the city since its start in 2001. The lights and decorations are purchased, organized and assembled by members of a local volunteer group of retirees, commonly referred to as The Grandpa Gang. Dick Alford, a member of the group for the past 11 years, said that the experience of volunteering with The Grandpa Gang is highly rewarding.

"Probably the most important [reward] is the thanks you receive and the looks on the faces of children and adults who come through the park," Alford said. Volunteer positions for The Grandpa Gang are posted across various news and media outlets, but most grandpas hear about it via word of mouth from current members.

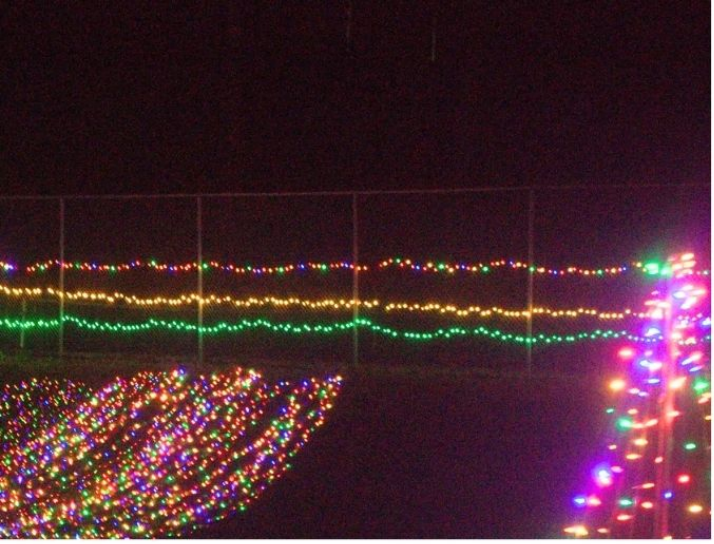
Preparation for the lights display, which includes hundreds of strands of multicolored LEDs and wooden structures, begins earlier than some might expect.

"Preparation actually starts at the end [of the light show's season]," Alford said. "We will review how the show went, changes and additions that we may want to make and order lights and any other materials for the next season."

The actual construction of the park layout begins in early September. Lights must be strung from trees and along the viewing route, as well as around the many wooden displays and billboards that make an appearance each year.

The Grandpas face challenges greater than just massive quantities of lights, however. Late autumn brings wind and rain, weather that can greatly hinder the volunteers' hard work.

"Another problem that most are unaware of is the deer," Alford said. "They will run through the park tearing down lights, and on occasion, committing vandalism."



Lights illuminate a Miles Davis portrait at the Christmas Wonderland. *Photo Stella Cowan, Copy Editor*

The struggles, however, are reportedly nothing compared to the joy of watching difficult work pay off.

"We hope people realize and know that The Grandpa Gang puts Christmas Wonderland together for the enjoyment of all who attend," Alford said.

The lights are an important part of the holiday season for many residents of Alton.

"I love the lights," senior Isabelle Seymour said. "I've been going to them my whole life."

This year the light show opened Friday, Nov. 28 and runs through Sunday, Dec. 28.

A donation of $10 is suggested for cars, and vehicles with over 10 people pay $1 per person.

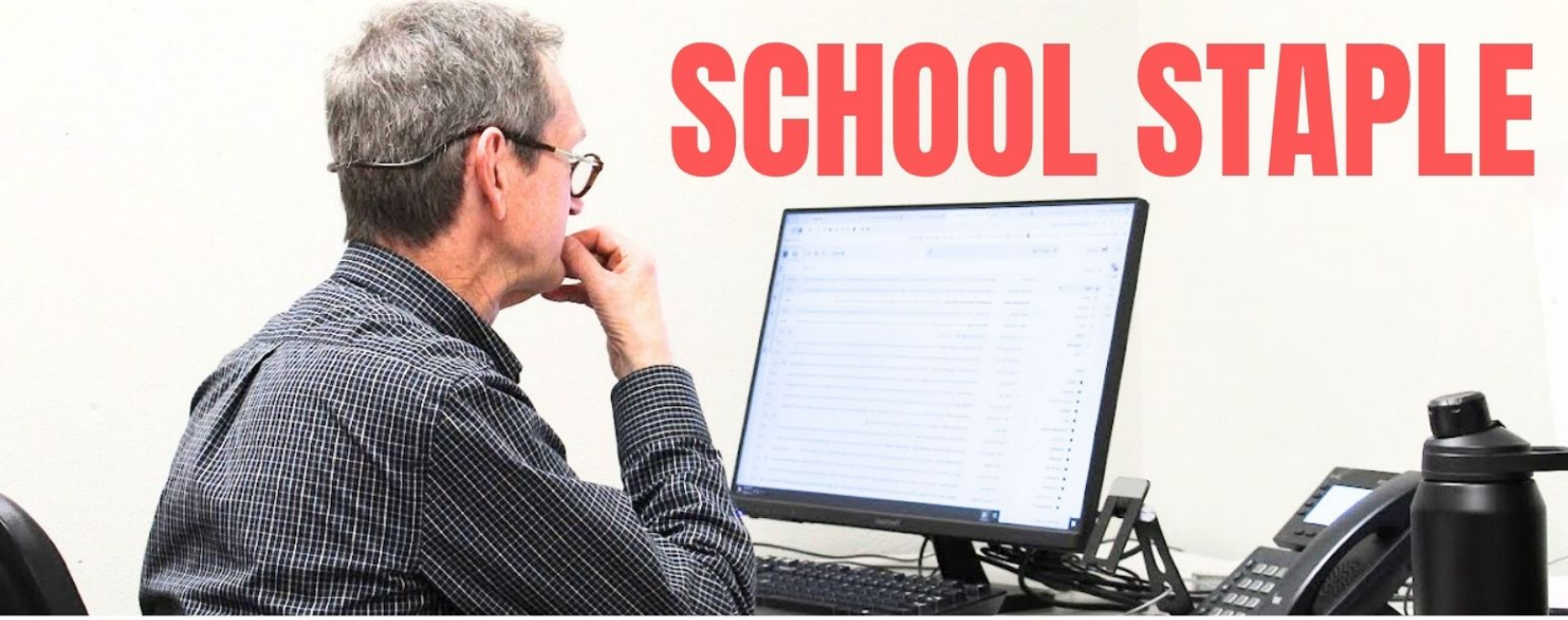
The Grandpa Gang, as well as individual volunteers who run the park during its display hours, are excited to see this year's lights come to life. Their dedication to community tradition can be seen across the trees and hills spangled with thousands of carefully placed bulbs, turning the night into a true Christmas Wonderland.

"We hope [people] understand that we do this for the enjoyment of others and that the proceeds we receive allow us to donate back to the community," Alford said. "We hope everyone has a joyful Christmas holiday and that we may have played a part in that."

Festive houses line Rock Springs Drive. *Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo and Art Editor*

A church display is lit up from below alongside the driving route of Rock Springs Park. *Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo and Art Editor*

LED lights create glowing shapes in the night. *Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo and Art Editor*



Curvey sits at his desk reviewing emails.
Photo by Kyridas Orr

Vernon Curvey Steps Back Into The Classroom

By Kyridas Orr, Sports Editor

Before students enter Alton High School, long before the hallways fill with backpacks and chatter, assistant principal and math teacher Vernon Curvey is already moving through the building he's helped shape for 25 years. Before Curvey was an administrator, he taught math for 20 years. He taught every math course besides calculus and geometry.

"It was great," Curvey said. "Best job I ever had."

Working for the Alton School District was nothing short of compelling for Curvey.

"It's interesting because you get to see from a different angle," Curvey said. "You learn more about some kids and you get to understand the 'whys' behind things."

What sets Curvey apart from others is his connection with the students. It is not through authority, but through attentive listening. In the halls, in his office or during a quick conversation between classes, he gives students his full attention. He listens first, without rushing to judgment or jumping to solutions, and that simple act makes students feel respected and understood.

"I'd like for most people to know I do care," Curvey said. Curvey isn't the type to lead with a booming voice or a strict tone.

Instead, Curvey's impact comes from his chill, understanding approach, one that makes students feel seen and staff feel supported. Curvey embodies the core of servant leadership. The belief that true leadership begins with service and leads by example.

"I think my leadership style is not very conducive to 'take charge, be a leader,' but I'm more of a 'just let me do it,'" Curvey said.

Curvey's retirement was already in for 2025-26, which would be his last year, but then the school got approval to open a new position.

"I am uniquely qualified for this position," Curvey said.

He referred to the fact that he taught math in the classroom for 20 years and has now been able to pull back from the classroom and look at things from a much wider perspective as an administrator. He is not just focused on the student in front of him, but is looking at the entire student body; his lens "shifts."

"Now stepping back into the classroom and seeing through both lense... at the same time has created a unique view that I think works to assist the district and each student," Curvey said.

Curvey's role in this class is to create an environment that the school wants other classrooms to emulate.

"We want to steer away from the old model (100 years or more) of standing in front of the class and lecturing," Curvey said.

So when they had to hire multiple administrators for the new school year, the district had already hired Curvey's replacement [Nicole Walker].

Every school year that has passed, Curvey said his favorite part is graduation.

"Graduation is always awesome," Curvey said. "Especially when they put me in charge of it. It's like the Super Bowl for high school. Also, reading my kids' names as they walked across the stage was pretty cool."

As the school year progresses, with Curvey's last graduation in sight, he will continue to do what he has done for the past 25 years – lead by example and remain to help students day-by-day. Whether it's in the classroom, halls or in his office, his sarcastic humor that never ends, the time spent bettering the school, and his tolerance will never be forgotten at Alton High School.

Alton Works To Rebuild The Community Throughout The District

By Victoria Strowmatt, Copyeditor

REIMAGINE ALTON

National Honor Society members Samuel Caughran, Alexis Cherry, Morgan Alexander and Eden Hough volunteer during the Reimagine Alton meeting on Nov. 5 to hand out snacks. *Photo by Stella Cowan, Copyeditor*

On Nov. 5, Reimagine Alton hosted a meeting at Alton Middle School to discuss further changes to improve our school district as a whole. Reimagine Alton is a plan that works towards a safer and open community. Parents, teachers and students had a chance to help revise and improve a plan for future school years.

Five workshops will occur during the 2025-26 school year. These workshops give people who are connected to the Alton School District a chance to voice their opinions and potentially improve rules. The first meeting occurred on Sept. 30 introducing the District Improvement Plan.

The second meeting occurred on Nov. 5 which revised the District Improvement Plan based on feedback from the first workshop. The final three meetings will occur in the spring of 2026. Specific dates are yet to be determined. Feedback from every session will be provided in a report for the Board of Education in June 2026.

Feedback and suggestions are taken into consideration in the meeting's executive summary. The summary highlighted better communication, attendance, safety and bullying prevention and relationship building between students and staff.

"I came to the meeting not as an assistant principal [but as a member of the Alton Community]," assistant principal Vernon Curvey said. "This is my last year before I retire. I went to Alton High and so did my dad and children, now my grandchildren are. I want to continue helping. I thought this is a good way and something Alton's needed for a long time."

These meetings are open to the public. Anyone in the Alton community can attend. These workshops encourage change and cooperation to make the Alton community a better place.

"I think just starting the conversation was the most important part," Curvey said. "Making it so that nothing was off limits to talk about. We talked about graduation rates, attendance and out of all of that. I think this connects to a sense of belonging, like what can we do to help everybody feel like this is a place they want to be at?"

Curvey voiced the importance of creating a better and open environment in the Alton School District where anyone can share their opinions.

Though it may have some flaws in the beginning, these meetings are a first step in the right direction.

"Some of the things I disagreed with were mainly about how it was on the students for their attendance once they miss more than 18 days," senior Morgan Alexander said. "While I understand the point teachers are trying to make, younger students don't have the control over their attendance that the upperclassmen do. I know of at least a couple of freshmen that missed about two weeks of school for family issues that they couldn't control. I think these kinds of meetings are imperative for growth as a district and as a community. Especially with representation from the students, as everybody that attended enjoyed our insight on topics."

The Reimagine Alton workshops are part of a constant effort to improve communication and collaboration. By providing teachers, students and families with valuable chances to share their experiences, the district aims to make lasting changes that meet the needs of the whole community.

AL DENTE

Chef Adams Whips Up New Skills In The Classroom

By Jessica Zhong, Reporter
Edited by Lily Waltz, Features Editor

Chef Joshua Adams watches over students preparing cupcakes.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo & Art Editor

In the back of an IMO's kitchen at 15-years-old, Chef Joshua Adams could be found slicing pizzas and serving customers. Now a culinary arts teacher at Alton High, he has earned a vast background in foods since then, as he moved on to country clubs and local work experiences.

Adams' love for cooking derives from the community it brings together. He said his grandmother was the one to instill the sense of community through her own cooking. From then on, he brought the feelings of community to everyone around him.

"She was like my person and taught me everything she knew about cooking," Adams said. "That really inspired me to like to do something for other people because that was her thing, like always feed the people who are here."

Librarian Fiona Griswold who has worked with Adams since early pandemic days appreciates his sense of community and connection with students and staff.

"He's just an amazing individual," Griswold said. "He's all about community and likes what's best for the community and what's best for the school."

In 2012, his wife Tatiana Adams was adamant on him furthering his education, being a teacher herself. Therefore, wanting to show the importance of education to their children, he decided to continue his education in culinary arts.

"She [Mrs. Adams] went to standard college ..." Adams said. "I went to culinary school, which is a trade option. So we had the best of both worlds."

While balancing his time during culinary school, he acquired a job at Vista Ramen. By then he had become fully immersed in the world of culinary arts through sheer will and determination.

"6:00 in the morning to 1:00 in the afternoon, I was at culinary school and from 2:00 in the afternoon to 1:00 in the morning I was at the restaurant," Adams said. "So it was a lot of work, a lot of dedication, a lot of determination to get through."

Adams found his way into the district during COVID when an ISS supervisor position had opened up. He then moved to the discipline office for a few years, but started his teaching career in culinary arts at Collinsville last year. This year, he returned back to Alton High as the culinary arts I and II teacher.

"When he left to go to Collinsville for a year, I feel like the largest percent ... of faculty and staff here really felt his loss," Griswold said. "... he just really makes an effort to get to know people, both staff and students alike."

As a chef that worked in many restaurants, he has taught numerous upcoming chefs.

Yet, the most difficult challenge for Adams when transitioning into a culinary arts teacher was the generational difference between him and his students.

"I'll welcome anybody, but it's hard to get to know people who are so much younger than you, right," Adams said. "... How can I reach you on a personal level and support you in your academics so that when you're in class, you support the ideas I'm sharing with you."

"He tries to have a good time and good experience for students when cooking," culinary arts student Tatianna Marshall said. "... He has a sense of humor. He has time management. He's reasonable and is open to trying new things."

Chef Adams' culinary career has taken a lot of effort to achieve his livelihood today. Alongside thousands of hours in the kitchen, he is a dad and husband too. He now passes the torch and skills of culinary arts onto the next generation.

RESOLUTIONS

How To Strive Into the New Year with Resolutions

By Lydia Copeland, Social Media Manager

As the new year approaches, commitment becomes a common topic of discussion. A surplus of self-deprecating memes relating to the lack of commitment towards New Year's resolutions often surface as Jan. 1 approaches. I've been what some might call a "quitter" all my life from hobbies to assignments. I've never been able to stick with something for long. If I were to take interest in learning the kazoo, I'd give up before I could buy it. To counteract this, I have compiled the guide on all things New Year's resolutions as a part of a resolution of my own: actually finishing something for once.

STEP 1: Decide on your resolution. In order to stick with it, you'll have to come up with the perfect resolution. The key is to find something that challenges you while remaining attainable. Compiling a list of both small and large resolutions can offer more encouragement than just hitting 75 hard - because let's be honest, most are tapping out around day six or seven. If you choose something that is too far out of reach, you may feel less likely to succeed which can increase the odds of your early surrender. You may already have something in mind such as a new hobby, increasing work ethic, showering a little more often or sticking to a diet, but if you're struggling to come up with something, you can try consulting social media. Instagram is suffocating in life goal influencers - some of which are in the same boat of having performative goals. Google or your friends and family are also a great resource for ideas.

STEP 2: Come up with a game plan. If you struggle with this, you can take inspiration from some of your favorite public figures, such as the G.O.A.T (greatest of all time).

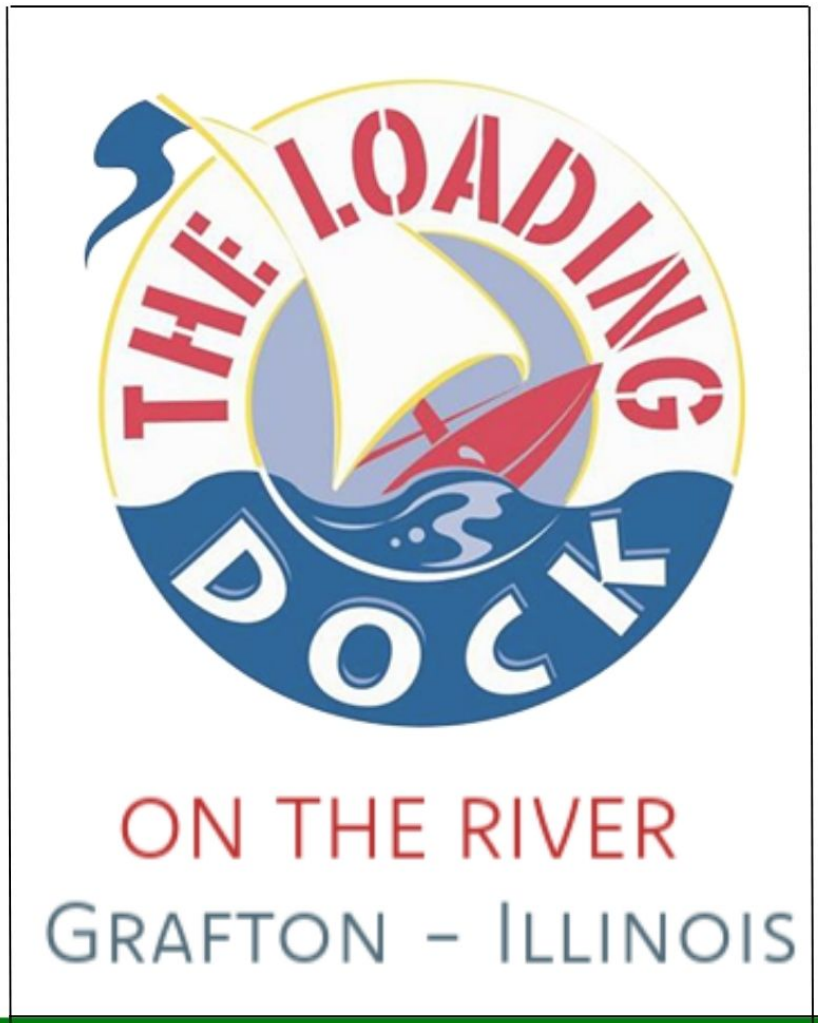
"You have to be able to accept failure to get better," Lebron James said in a CBS interview in 2009.

It's hard to stick with anything if you're going in blindly. I suggest doing your research first, and that doesn't just mean reading the life goal post on Instagram. If you're starting a new hobby, you'll need to look into some tutorials and determine whether it's realistic for yourself.

You'll also need to purchase any necessary materials and eliminate any excuse to not succeed. Coming up with a specific routine may also help with your consistency.

STEP 3: Believe in yourself. If you go into this process with no faith, you're going to come out of it with no results. Mental blocks will always be the hardest part. Whether your goal is to broaden your horizons, gain knowledge or improve your health, your resolution should be executed with only yourself in mind. Many goals are set with other people's perceptions in mind. So to avoid becoming that fake motivational gym Instagram page, find goals that are genuinely beneficial to you, not things that will impress people who drink matcha or wear quarter zips.

This has been the perfect guide to all things New Year's resolutions. Hopefully you're now feeling a little bit more prepared to not only pick the perfect resolution, but also stick with it.



Political Divide Disrupts American Unity

By The Redbird Word Staff

Check out our online content!

The divide between Democrats and Republicans has grown beyond an everyday disagreement affecting workplaces, personal relationships and home lives on a regular basis. Political debate is nothing new, but has become dangerous and inconsiderate to humanity's daily routine in recent years. Government shutdowns, mass propaganda and unorganized public debates reveal our leaders' polarized lack of willingness to work towards good for all.

The most recent government shutdown was officially marked as the longest in recorded history, lasting a total of 44 days. A survey by Partnership for Public Services found that the government shutdown provides a national lasting effect on the American public, 48% say the shutdown affected their community or even themselves. A quarter of the respondents answered as unsure and only 27% disagree.

The reluctance to negotiate and build accommodations allowed for both parties to weaponize the direction of a budget and work against each other while leaving national parks closed, federal workers without pay and the public without services that are often relied on. The shutdown offered examples of dilemma and the outcome of division in leadership positions.

A Reuters/Ipso poll found that 79% of people believe citizens have become less tolerant to political viewpoints that are different from their own over the last 20 years. This lack of connection, even in our own political cabinet, causes a noticeable rift between Americans. A weak connection between leaders supports the growing disconnect between the American people.

However, a factor increasing the divide is the constant growth and harshness of political propaganda. Intense biased pressure towards an opposing political party continues to build negative relationships between strangers and encourages Americans to think based on emotion rather than fact.

An Associated Press survey showed that 60% of Republicans and 26% of Democrats have almost no trust in news media. Biases throughout seemingly trustworthy news outlets lead unknowing readers to believe another's opinion as fact.

Cognitive research studies by Cameron Martel, Gordon Pennycook and David Rand show connections between emotions and an intake of news, "The current results show that emotion plays a causal role in people's susceptibility to incorrectly perceiving fake news as accurate." Stubborn and undereducated patriotism contributes to the further surrender of uniting the American people.

Simultaneously, political debates have become more emotionally charged, unfocused and increasingly unsophisticated. Pew also found in a study that 84% of adults say political debates have become less respectful over several recent years. When the topic of a debate gets lost, listeners hear resentment and arguing rather than solution, further causing a divide.

Ultimately, the ongoing expanding divide throughout democracy has gone further than a disagreement over policy and has increasingly affected personal relationships and daily lives. Pew shares that 55% of a survey always feels exhausted or angry (65%) with current politics and only 4% feel excited or hopeful (10%).

Prioritizing conflict, over mutual respect and collaboration, has proven to cause a battle between the American people and an incapability to unite. Government stillness, mass propaganda and hostile debates have created an unwelcoming and distrustful environment between citizens and leaders of both parties.

Editorial policy: The Redbird Word and The Daily Bird operate as public forums of expression. Readers can email letters to the editor at the.redbird.word@gmail.com Expressions made in these student-led publications are in no way an expression of the district or the school board.

EDITORIAL

LYDIA COPELAND

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

Hello! My name is Lydia Copeland. I am 17 years old and a senior in high school. I am on track to graduate early and I hope to backpack across the east coast and go to Illinois State University for Psychology. This is my third year as a student journalist. I am the social media manager for The Redbird Word and Daily Bird. I have a passion for film and video editing. I post comedic videos with my friends on my Youtube channel Briana and Lydia and am the video editor for the Riverbend Talent radio show on WBGZ. I would love to go into something film or journalism related in the future if I weren't so financially greedy. Some of my other hobbies include reading, listening to music and most importantly, spending quality time with close friends.

SAYING GOODBYE TO OUR EARLY GRADUATES

Finn Lile
News Editor

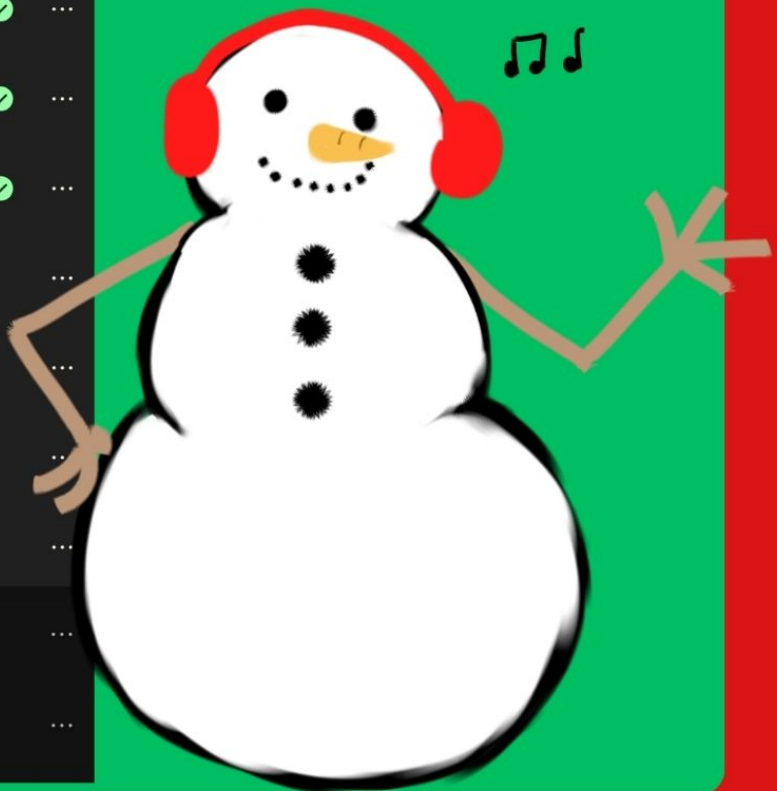
Hello! My name is Finn Lile. I am an early graduate this year. I am the news editor for The Redbird Word and The Daily Bird. After high school I want to go Into electricity but I haven't decided what college I would like to attend. I like to read, write, draw and create anything and everything. I like cooking and baking whenever I can. Outside of school I babysit and petsit as needed because I enjoy being around animals as well as kids. I am in Muy Alpha Theta and tutor kids in math to the best of my ability when they need a little extra help. In my free time I spend time training and playing with my 2 puppies, Winnie and Charlotte.

Merry Christmas Redbirds

SCAN ME

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LISTEN TO A SPOTIFY PLAYLIST OF THE REDBIRD WORD'S FAVORITE CHRISTMAS SONGS!

- Little Saint Nick — The Beach Boys
- Please Come Home for Christmas - 2013 Remas... — Eagles
- Merry Christmas, Please Don't Call — Bleachers
- Last Christmas — Wham!
- Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas — Phoebe Bridgers
- Sleigh Ride — The Ronettes
- Every Snowflake Is Different (Just Like You) — My Chemical Romance
- Mistletoe — Justin Bieber
- All I Want for Christmas Is You - 2005 — My Chemical Romance
- Christmas Tree Farm — Taylor Swift
- Santa Tell Me — Ariana Grande
- Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree — Brenda Lee
- Baby, It's Cold Outside - Feat. Cherie Lynn — Rick Reuther
- Blue Christmas — Elvis Presley
- Santa Claus Is Coming To Town — The Jackson 5
- Run, Run, Rudolph — Patrick Carpenter



Compiled by Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager